



Natural Resources Conservation Service
P.O. Box 2890
Washington, D.C. 20013

SUBJECT: LEG - Protocol for Contacts with Congressional
Members and Staff

May 22, 2003

TO: All NRCS Employees

File Code: 320

As a reminder to all Natural Resources Conservation Service employees, all contacts with congressional members and staff dealing with work-related issues should be cleared in advance by the NRCS Office of the Chief, Legislative Affairs Staff (OOC-LA). This policy promotes coordination of NRCS policy and Agency messages. As a general rule, NRCS employees should adhere to the following guidelines:

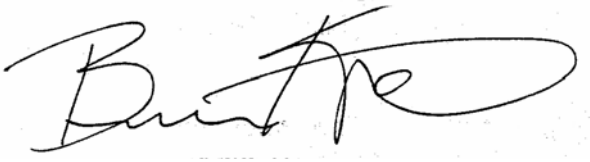
1. Visits to the Hill - All visits to Capitol Hill, including informational sessions, ceremonies, courtesy visits, etc., must be cleared in advance by OOC-LA. This includes meetings at the request of congressional members or staff.
2. Documents provided to Congress - Any NRCS employee providing informational materials to congressional offices is responsible for clearing the materials with OOC-LA in advance.
3. Hearings - All NRCS employees, including any individual on the Federal payroll (including Resource Conservation and Development coordinators) must have testimony cleared through the Agency, Department, and White House levels. This process can regularly take up to 10 working days. If you are asked to provide testimony to a congressional committee, please notify OOC-LA immediately to begin coordinating NRCS participation in the hearing. Also, any employee attending a hearing for informational purposes requires clearance only from OOC-LA.
4. Detail Assignments - Requests for employees detailed to the office of a Member of Congress must be sent in writing directly from a Member of Congress to the Secretary of Agriculture. Details must be for a set period of time, directly relate to the employee's expertise, and agency mission. Detailed assignments with congressional offices must take place in Washington, D.C. The Department will respond directly to any congressional detail assignment requests.
5. Congressional Correspondence - All correspondence provided to a congressional member or staff must be cleared by OOC-LA in advance of signature by an NRCS official.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

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6. General Contacts - When NRCS employees answer questions or provide updates by telephone, e-mail, etc., they are encouraged to follow-up with a contact to OOC-LA regarding the subject and content of their discussion. This helps coordinate messages, manage issues, and will improve future contacts with congressional members and staff.

If you have any questions about this policy, please do not hesitate to contact me, or the Director of Legislative Affairs, Doug McKalip, at (202) 720-2771.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce I. Knight", with a large, stylized loop at the end.

BRUCE I. KNIGHT
Chief